

# CHRISTIAN SECTION.

His eye that meet and gentle smile  
 His face his lips, and his sweet voice  
 His heart that beats, and his love  
 His spirit that dwells in his soul  
 What a joy to be near him

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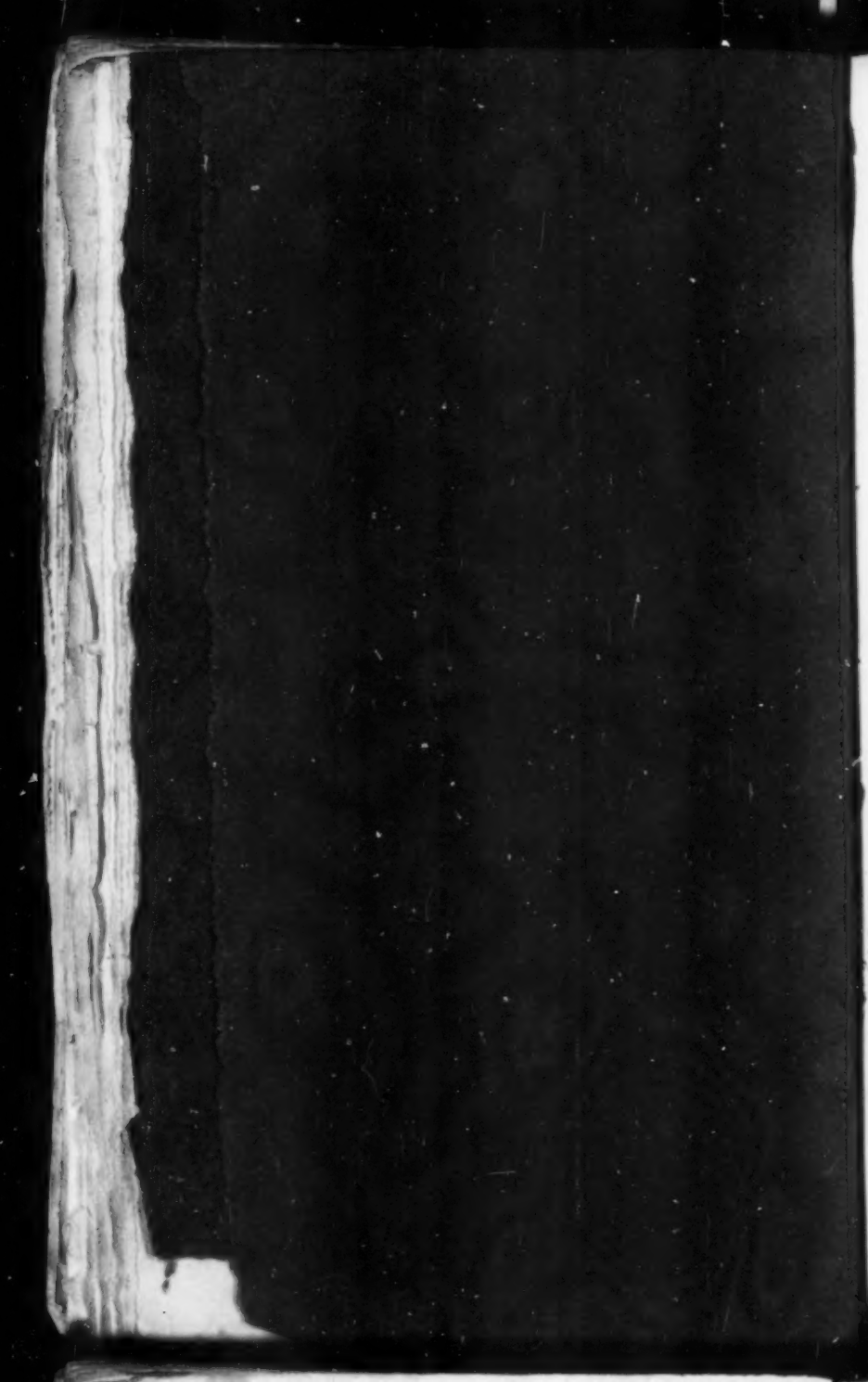
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## PROVIDENCE.

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THE  
**CHRISTIAN VISITOR.**

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Thus men go wrong with an ingenious skill ;  
Bend the straight rule to their own crooked will ;  
And, with a clear and shining lamp supplied,  
First put it out, then take it for a guide.  
Halting on crutches of unequal size ;  
One leg by truth supported, one by lies ;  
They sidle to the goal with awkward pace,  
Secure of nothing—but to lose the race.

COWPER.

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ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

**Unreasonableness of Indecision in Religion---No. 1.**

Indecision is uniformly considered as a defect of character. There is always an inefficiency in an undecided character, which, if it is not blamed, never fails to excite either pity or disgust. There are some subjects, on which mankind can, with more propriety and more safety, be undecided than others. The more important a subject is to an individual, the greater is the impropriety and danger of his being undecided in regard to it. Mankind are frequently undecided, and very improperly and criminally undecided, with respect to many important subjects of a worldly nature. But on no subject in which they are all deeply interested, are they so generally undecided as upon religion. Nor is there any one, in regard to which their indecision is so unreasonable. It

may not perhaps, be unpleasant or unprofitable to the readers of the *Christian Visitor* to consider for a moment the unreasonableness of indecision in religion. To avoid wearying their patience, however, I shall in this number invite their attention to one branch of the subject only, viz. the unreasonableness of indecision in regard to the truth of the christian religion.—There are many, who have never yet satisfied themselves in regard to the question, whether the scriptures, the foundation of the christian religion, are the word of God, or the “cunningly devised fables” of men. They have never thought, or read, or conversed much on this subject; and whenever they have done either, they have not arrived at any satisfactory conclusion. With the scriptures in their hands, with the means of knowing both the internal and external evidence of their divine origin, and with all the motives to a serious examination of this subject, which its acknowledged importance, and the regard paid to it by others, present before them, they know not what to believe. They often think of death. But as they are in doubt respecting the truths of the scriptures from which all satisfactory evidence of a future state is derived, they remain in painful uncertainty with respect to every thing beyond the grave. Believing that there is a God, and having been taught that he will yet bring them into judgment for every secret thing, they cannot avoid some alarming apprehensions respecting the scenes of the last day. But a doubt respecting the reality of these scenes,

prevents the effect, which a consideration of them would otherwise produce. Their uncertainty respecting the truth of the scriptures, leads them to view the whole catalogue of christian duties, except those which they say nature herself enjoins, as practices of a doubtful kind. They sometimes fear that they are precepts of God ; but choose rather to consider them as the commandment of men. Although they doubt whether the bible is the word of God ; yet a fear that it is, at times gives them great uneasiness. A possibility of its being true, if not sufficient to influence their conduct, sometimes greatly disturbs their peace. What is said of eternity, they view with indifference, when they disbelieve it, but with anxiety, when they fear it is true. Heaven and hell are subjects which they consider with less joy or terror, than those who really believe in their existence ; but with greater interest than those, who have no hope of the one, or fear of the other.

Now this doubt and uncertainty respecting the truth of the christian religion is unreasonable. If the bible is a "cunningly devised fable," imposed upon the world by the artifice of designing men, those who have an opportunity to examine it, may be satisfied that it is so ; for it is incredible that a Being of infinite goodness, as all acknowledge God is, should suffer a false scheme of religion, one that cannot possibly be distinguished from the truth to be imposed upon his creatures. It is in effect, to suppose that he himself has placed them under a delusion

from which there is no possibility of escape : a delusion too which terrifies them with needless fears, which excites hopes that must eventually be disappointed ; and which virtually impeaches his own moral character.

If the christian religion is true, those who have an opportunity of examining the scriptures, may be satisfied that it is so ; for to suppose that God saw that we stood in need of a revelation, and to meet our necessity gave us one, complete in every respect, but without satisfactory evidence of its Divine original, is absurd. To be necessarily in doubt respecting the truth of the revelation which we have, is the same, in its effects as to be without a revelation.— For what more as it respects the grand purposes of revelation do we know, with the bible in our hands, if we cannot be satisfied that this contains a revelation from God, than we should know without it ? Just nothing at all.

If then it be admitted that satisfaction with respect to the truth or falsehood of the christian religion may be obtained, is it not very unreasonable for any to remain in doubt respecting it ? Their own happiness very much depends upon their knowing the truth or falsehood of christianity. If it is false it is important, that they should know it ; because the truth is a thing in itself desirable, and ultimately productive of happiness. If it is true, it is important, that they should know it ; because admitting its truth, their eternal happiness or misery depends upon an acceptance, or rejection of its proposals. The mere possibility that the christ-

ian religion may prove true, is a sufficient reason why every individual should examine it with the utmost seriousness and impartiality, until he is satisfied.

But it is not enough to say here that mankind ought to be satisfied whether the christian religion is true, or false : they ought to be satisfied, that it is true. There is incontestible evidence, that what is contained in the bible is the word of God ; and no man who considers this with that seriousness and impartiality which the importance of the subject demands can remain in doubt. It is not for want of evidence to support the truth of christianity, that so many remain in unbelief. It is because they do not consider this evidence with that seriousness, candour and impartiality, which the subject demands.

Let those who are in doubt respecting the truths of revelation consider how much this was needed, the disposition which God has ever manifested to supply the wants of his creatures, the improbability that any man, or any set of men, would undertake such a work as the bible, the fact that bad men could have no inducement to circulate a work the tendency of which is to promote virtue in the highest degree, and that good men would not be guilty of such fraud as to impose upon the world, as the truth of God, a history of facts which they knew to be false. Let them open the sacred pages, and see what marks of divinity are exhibited. Although written at different times and by various authors ; yet one ultimate object

appears to be what they all had in view. The style, in which their thoughts are communicated, possesses a heavenly sublimity which no art could ever equal. The tendency of all that is revealed is evidently to glorify God, and to promote the holiness and happiness of his creatures. Here are predictions known from history to have been written long before the events which have since appeared to be an exact fulfilment of them, took place. As one out of many of this description, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans may be mentioned.—Other prophecies are here recorded which are doubtless fulfilling at the present day. Of the Jews it is written, “The Lord shall scatter thee among all the people from the one end of the earth even unto the other;—and among those nations thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest.” If we would see a fulfilment of this prediction, let us look at God’s ancient covenant people, now dispersed among all nations of the earth, reviled and persecuted by the gentiles whom they once cordially despised. Let those, who are undetermined with respect to the truths of christianity, consider the effects which it has produced, the opposition which it has encountered, the feeble means with which it has been propagated, and the length of time which it has prevailed in the world, notwithstanding all the efforts of its numerous and powerful enemies to destroy it. Let them look at those places, in which the religion of the gospel has recently revived in its power and purity, and see the stupid awakened,



the profligate reformed, and they who were once its open opposers now become its warmest friends, and if they will be candid, they must acknowledge that this is no human art or device.

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### The happiness of trusting in God.

It is often declared in the scriptures, that they, who trust in God, are truly happy. Trusting in God involves such views and exercises, as afford peculiar satisfaction. It necessarily implies a realizing sense of the divine presence. The soul draws near to God in an act of trust and dependence upon him. Men never trust in an absent, but in a present God. They feel that God is not far from them, but surrounds them by his invisible presence. And such a sense of his nearness fills their minds with peculiar solemnity and calmness. Hence says David, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." Trusting in the Lord implies a realizing sense of the divine perfections. The power, the wisdom and goodness of God, render him an object of supreme trust and confidence; and therefore trusting in him necessarily presupposes a clear and lively view of these perfections of his nature. And nothing can afford greater pleasure to poor, weak, unworthy creatures, than the contemplation of infinite power, unerring wisdom, and boundless goodness, employed for their good and the good of the universe. They feel strong in the Lord, and in the power of

his might. They feel safe and happy in his hand. In his light they see light, and enjoy peace. Trusting in God puts them into the immediate enjoyment of God; for God himself is their trust and hope. Their duty and happiness, in this case, are inseparably connected, for so long as they trust in the Lord they must be blessed. Again,

Those who trust in the Lord must be happy, because they firmly believe, that all things will terminate well. Their trust in God removes all doubt, respecting the final issue of things. They believe that all things ever have been, and always will be conducted in the wisest and best manner. So that every thing in their view, is just as they would have it. They choose that God should please himself; their wills are swallowed up in his will; so that their happiness is inseparably connected with the happiness of the Deity. When Eli trusted in the Lord, he resigned his will to the divine will, and was happy. When David trusted in the Lord, he resigned himself to the will of God, and was happy. When Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, he cordially submitted to God, and was happy. When the Shunamite trusted in the Lord, she believed that all things were well, and was happy. And our Saviour himself was happy when he trusted in his Father and said, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." Those who trust in the Lord, see no ground for anxiety about future events, because they know, that God will do all things well, and bring about the very ends which they wish

should be accomplished. While God is their trust, he must necessarily be their hope and their happiness.

Besides, God has given particular promises to those who trust in his faithfulness. And while they take hold of these great and precious promises, they must be blessed.

God has promised to afford them all that guidance and direction which they need, while passing through this dark and evil world. Thus we read in the third chapter of Proverbs. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." How happy must those be, who have God at their right hand, to guide and direct them in the path of duty, when, of themselves, they know not what to do? This, God does, for all those, who trust in him. Though he does not, at this day, speak to them by an audible voice, yet he guides all the motions and exercises of their hearts, and governs all their voluntary determinations. He makes them choose, in all cases, to do whatever he sees necessary to be done by them, and guides every step they take in their journey through life.—The promise of such a guiding, directing, and overruling influence, must be a source of peculiar satisfaction and comfort. It is a most desirable and necessary favor.

God has promised those who trust in him, to afford them his powerful protection, while they are exposed to all the evils and dangers of the present life. This we find in the 125th psalm.

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever.” This promise was fulfilled to the ancient patriarchs, to the prophets and apostles, to the primitive christians, and to all true believers ever since. And it is still in full force and obligation; and applies to all that trust in the Lord. God surrounds them by his presence, as the mountains surrounded Jerusalem, and all his perfections are constantly engaged for their protection. No harm nor accident, no evil or calamity can hurt them, which God sees best they should not suffer. He will afford them all the protection which they can ever need in any situation in which they are placed. God will keep all those, who commit themselves to his keeping, as in the hollow of his hand, and secure as the apple of his eye. And while they take hold of this precious promise, they must possess their souls in peace and hope, and enjoy strong consolation amidst all the dangers of this wicked world.

God has promised divine strength and assistance in duty to those, who trust in him. This promise we find in the 40th of Isaiah. “He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they

shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." Saints need divine aid and assistance in every act of duty. They are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing, as of themselves; but their sufficiency is of God. All good men feel their moral weakness and insufficiency to do their duty, and therefore are sensible of their constant need of divine aid and influence in obeying the divine commands. They are not satisfied with barely doing these things, which God has required, but they desire to do the will of God from the heart; and this they know depends upon the divine influence upon their minds. As they wish to do every thing heartily unto the Lord, and not unto men; so they sensibly feel the need of divine aid, in all the duties which they are called to perform. And when they reflect upon the divine promise, that when they are weak they shall be strong, it affords them peculiar satisfaction.

God has promised to bestow all good upon those, who trust in him. This great and extensive promise runs in this form: "The Lord is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." Here all temporal and spiritual blessings are promised to those, who trust in the Lord. Amidst the numerous inhabitants of heaven and earth, God will keep his eye and his heart upon those who give up themselves and all things into his hand, and he will take care of their interests, and suffer nothing to destroy their happiness,

in all the revolutions and changes which take place in any part of the universe. Hence says the apostle, "we know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose." And again he says, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." Thus it appears, that those, who trust in God must be happy. Their happiness is secured by the perfections and promises of God, which are the strongest security in the universe.

The important sentiment, which is under our present consideration, suggests a few remarks.

And since trusting in God is the only way to be happy, we may see why the wicked are destroyed by their prosperity. The wicked have generally been more prosperous in their worldly interests than the righteous. And according to the scriptures, their worldly prosperity is extremely dangerous and destructive to their spiritual and eternal interests. The psalmist says, "when the wicked spring up as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." Again it is written, "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Their prosperity is their destruction, because it affords objects of dependence, on which they trust for happiness. "The rich man's wealth is his strong tower." Prosperity prevents men from feeling their dependence upon God, and turns their hearts from him to other objects for happiness. In view

of the prosperity of the wicked, the psalmist says to God, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction."

Again. Since trusting in God affords true happiness, they, who are sensibly cut off from this ground of trust must be miserable. This is always the case of awakened sinners. Their awakenings shake them from all their objects of dependence. When they are awakened so as to see their character and condition, they perceive that worldly objects which they have pursued as their portion, afford no foundation for confidence and happiness. As they are obliged to despair of happiness from the world, so they are soon obliged to renounce all confidence in men and means for relief and salvation. And they are finally obliged to renounce all confidence in themselves. In this situation, awakened sinners find themselves ruined and helpless. Every refuge and every hope fails. And there is nothing, in which they can trust. Nor do they know what to do. They have no heart to trust in God and there is no other foundation of confidence. In their situation, therefore, awakened sinners can see nothing but darkness and despair. How miserable, then, must be the eternal condition of sinners, who shall be finally impenitent. They will have no object to depend upon for support. They can have no hope nor help from God, nor Christ, nor angels, nor saints, nor sinners. Upon no object in the universe can they for a moment fix their hearts for the least good through eter-

nity. They must sink in misery and despair for ever and ever. It does, then, most deeply concern all persons now to trust in God. They are wholly dependent upon him. And until they rejoice in their dependance upon God, who is the sovereign of the universe, they can have no true rest nor peace. It is written "cursed is the man, whose heart departeth from the Lord." But "blessed is the man, that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."

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### The prosperity of the Church.

By the church, in the sense which is now meant, we are not to understand the whole number of the elect who are sometimes called the church; nor the whole number of religious professors. But by the church is now meant the whole number of the friends of God, that exist in the world at the present time. These are the persons, who compose what is called the invisible church. They have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. This church stands distinguished from all the rest of mankind, whether they have or have not named the name of Christ. This is the flock of Christ, which he purchased with his own blood. This is the spiritual kingdom of God, which consists of his cordial subjects. A succession of such men has constituted the true church of God in every age of the world. And it is the prosper-



ity of this true church, which every good man desires. It is important to consider what the prosperity of this church implies. This implies its increase in numbers. The church has sometimes been very small. It was once confined to the family of Noah. It was afterwards almost or quite confined to the family of Abraham. It was small in the time of Elijah, and probably smaller still in the days of Christ.—And since his day it has never been very large in comparison with the kingdoms and nations of the world. The smallness of its numbers is to be greatly lamented, and their increase to be desired. They, who desire the prosperity of the church, desire that it may be enlarged in numbers, and additions made unto it of such as shall be saved. This is represented and promised as the future prosperity of the church. “Hear, O Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen : Thus saith the Lord, that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee : Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground : I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring : and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.—One shall say, I am the Lord’s ; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob ; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.” Again it is said to the church, “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch”

the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles." The prophets, Christ, and the apostles have all predicted the accession of vast numbers to the church, which will greatly add to its strength, and glory, and prosperity. All large societies are more respected than small ones of the same kind. They, therefore, who wish well to the prosperity of the church, will certainly desire that it may increase in numbers and spread far and wide, from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. It is truly desirable, that the real friends of God should become more and more numerous, until the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven be given into their hands.

The prosperity of the church implies its increase in knowledge as well as numbers. The church has always been very deficient in divine knowledge, which has been a great obstruction to its prosperity. Though God has committed his sacred oracles to the church and given them many means to understand his mind and will, yet the church in general from age to age, have been slow of heart to believe and understand the great and glorious truths which are so eminently calculated for their comfort and edification. In Christ's day the best men in the church were extremely ignorant. In the apostle's days the converts to christianity were generally weak in knowledge, and stood in per-

petual need of apostolic and ministerial assistance, to guard them against the grossest errors and delusions. The same calamity still attends the christian church in every part of the world. It must, therefore, be the sincere desire of all who seek the prosperity of Zion, that divine light may be more and more increased. The church never will greatly prosper, until larger measures of religious knowledge are more generally communicated to it. Hence we find that this is one of the blessings, which is to constitute its future prosperity. "I will give you pastors according to mine heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." "Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people and healeth the stroke of their wound."—Again. "Thy watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." It is also written, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The more the church increases in divine knowledge, the more it will become the light of the world and appear in its beauty. Therefore none can desire its prosperity, without desiring its knowledge may be increased.

Again. The increase of the church in holiness is necessary to its prosperity. This is indeed a natural consequence of its increasing in knowledge. For the more light the children of

God possess, the more holiness they are capable of attaining. Though it is the peculiar and distinguishing character of the church to be holy, yet it has never attained to that measure of holiness, which would carry irresistible conviction to the world, that it is essentially distinct from it. But the time is coming, when the church will appear in all the beauties of holiness to the entire conviction of its enemies. This is abundantly promised in scripture.—“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” “They shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.” “In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, *Holiness to the Lord*: and the pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts; and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts.” These are strong, figurative expressions, to represent the large measures of holiness, which all the members of the church shall possess, and display before the eyes of the wondering world. And all, who wish well to Zion, ardently desire that she may put on her beautiful garments, and look forth as the morning, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. For the strength and terror, as well as the beauty of the church, consist in holiness.—It may be added.

That the prosperity of the church implies its enjoyment of peace and tranquility. It has hitherto been in a militant state, and been attacked, wounded, depressed, and weakened by enemies without and enemies within. More calamities have fallen upon the church than upon any other society or body of men. But it is to be desired, that it may rise superior to all opposition and enjoy internal peace and outward tranquility. And this desire may be increased and strengthened by the great and precious promises made to the church. "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice with joy with her, all ye that mourn for her. For thus saith the Lord, behold, I will extend *peace* to her like a river: Violence shall no more be heard in thy land; wasting and destruction within thy borders; thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain. And the Lord shall create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion and upon all her assemblies a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence." Such a state of peace and tranquility is much to be desired, as it will greatly contribute to the real prosperity, glory and felicity of the church. And all who desire the prosperity of Zion, must desire that her warfare may be finished, when there shall be none to hurt or destroy the harmless friends and followers of the prince of peace.— When all nations shall flow into the church and when its members shall be eminent for know-

ledge and holiness, and when it shall be relieved from its long and painful conflicts with external and internal enemies ; then will the church be raised to that state of prosperity and happiness, which it is yet to enjoy in the earth.

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### Holy Angels.

The time was, when angels frequently appeared in a visible form and freely conversed with the children of men. Then, if a man said he had seen an angel, it was as readily believed, as if he said, that he had seen one of his fellow-creatures. But since angels have ceased to make their visible appearance, many are ready to call in question, not only their presence and agency, but even their existence. It seems proper, therefore, to consult the scriptures of truth upon this subject and enquire what they say concerning these invisible beings. The angels are often mentioned in the scriptures and their principal features clearly delineated. According to the scriptures, they are the highest order of created beings. They are represented as prior and superior to men. They existed before our world was created. Thus God suggested to Job, in the humiliating questions, which he put to him. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said—where wast thou, when I laid the foundation of the earth ? when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy ?" David acknowledges angels to be superior to man, even

in his primitive dignity and glory. "What is man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor." And the apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews represents the nature of angels as distinct from the nature of the seed of Abraham and next in dignity to the divine Redeemer.

The angels are beings of superior power and wisdom. They are called "mighty angels"—They are said to excel in strength. The psalmist says, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." The wise woman of Tekoah, in her artful address to David, represents angels as possessed of the highest degree of created wisdom. She said, "My Lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things, that are in the earth." The arm of an angel is stronger than the arm of Sampson. And the wisdom of an angel is superior to the wisdom of Solomon. Though angels may have made no advances in power, yet they have doubtless made great advances in knowledge. They have been looking into the works and ways of God nearly six thousand years; and with their superior capacities must have exceedingly enlarged their views of God and of his vast creation. The angels are fixed in a state of permanent and superior holiness. They were once in a state of probation. But what was the test of their obedience we are not expressly informed. It is, however highly probable, that what proved

the occasion of the devils falling, was the occasion of their establishment in holiness. They are called the elect angels. And they made their election sure the day, that satan and his legions apostatized and renounced their allegiance to their Maker. Hence it is probable, that they consented to become ministering spirits to mankind, while satan and his followers disdained such a low and servile employment. Ever since that memorable day, they have been confirmed in holiness. And on that account they have been distinguished by the appellation of the holy angels. They were originally formed in the moral image of their Maker and have retained that image by keeping their first estate and persevering in righteousness. Nor is this all. For they have undoubtedly increased in holiness as fast as they have made advances in knowledge. Hence they far surpass all other created beings in their moral as well as natural excellencies.

Angels are not incumbered with such gross bodies as ours. They are represented as spirits. "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire." And again—"Are they not all ministering spirits?" Our Lord saith, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones." And the apostle says, "That flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Angels are inhabitants of heaven and therefore they are not clothed with flesh and blood; nor do they carry with them such gross material bodies as the human species do.—But yet it may be doubted, whether they are



altogether incorporeal and totally destitute of every material vehicle. They have certainly appeared to men in human form and as clothed in bodies. And though these may have been only temporary, yet it is most consonant to the analogy of things to suppose, that there is but one absolutely pure, incorporeal Spirit; and that all other intelligences are clothed either in terrestrial or celestial bodies. But these last mentioned bodies may be no disadvantage to angels, either in respect to the ease and rapidity of their motion, or to the clearness of their perceptions, or to the perfection of their enjoyments. It may be added,

There are various orders of angels. This is plainly revealed in scripture. Christ is said to create different orders of angels. "By him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers." Christ is said to be exalted "far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." In another place it is said, "he is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers, being made subject unto him." And besides these distinct orders of angels, we read of one, who is above all the rest and who is often called the archangel. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God." It has been a question whether there be more than one archangel and even whether there be one.

Some suppose that Christ is always meant, where the archangel is mentioned; and some suppose there are seven archangels. But, on the whole, it is most reasonable to suppose, that there is one and but one archangel.—

Whether the distinct orders of angels arise from any disparity in their powers, or from a divine appointment, it is not easy to determine. It is, however, the most agreeable to that beautiful variety, which is diffused over the works of God, to suppose that there is a real distinction in the highest order of beings. One angel may differ from another angel, as one star differs from another in glory. And they may be appointed to different offices and employments according to their different natural and moral excellences. The suggestions, which have now been stated, respecting the holy angels, afford pious persons a pleasant subject for contemplation. It is pleasant that God has such beings, as the angels, for constant objects of his approbation and complacency. Their happiness in the knowledge, service and favor of God must vastly exceed our apprehension. The happiness of angels in their own mutual affection and friendship must be exceedingly delightful and glorious. They are capable of services of greater importance and utility than we can conceive. The long period, which they have already existed and the certainty of their eternal existence in perfect holiness, blessedness and beauty, should lead us to exalt and praise God, who has given such an existence and such dignity and glory to an innumerable multitude of created beings.

## EXTRACTS.

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The Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is a mysterious doctrine of the christian revelation, which its enemies wish to represent as unreasonable.

This doctrine describes the mediator to be both God and man. The son of God in possession of his whole divinity; uniting with himself a perfect and innocent man, formed by his wisdom, for the purpose of displaying divine holiness, atoning for sin, and fulfilling a righteousness, through which transgression may be gloriously pardoned. This union of the divine and human natures, is supposed to exist, in the highest degree, without a communication of those attributes and properties to one nature, which were originally peculiar to the other. That it is a wonder, a mystery, a mighty work of God, all christians allow; but, that the belief of it is unreasonable, doth not follow. If it be possible, and also useful; it is worthy of God's infinite reason, wisdom and goodness.

The incarnation is possible.

The man Christ Jesus, was a creature of God's own forming.—The power of creating, implies the power of assuming his workmanship into any kind of union with himself, that is pleasing to his wisdom. The mystery of this union between infinite and finite, is no greater to us, than the union between our own souls and bodies, which no rational man will deny because he cannot explain it.

The incarnation is worthy of infinite wisdom.

This must be determined, from the effects it is designed to produce; which are made known by the word of God. The effects are the greatest which can be conceived, and are worthy of infinite wisdom. Is it not worthy of God, to save an innumerable company of guilty creatures, from eternal sin and misery and

bring them to a life of glorious and endless peace? Is it not worthy of him to glorify himself and make his kingdom happy by the display of his perfections, and thus enjoy the goodness of his own nature? These are the effects of Christ's incarnation. Effects so great and good must be glorious for God; and though in view of our weakness and guilt it is infinite condescension, in view of the glory which God brings to himself, it is a most credible event.

The sacred evidence of this fact in the divine government is very great. That Jesus Christ was man cannot be doubted. He must also be God, for divine names the most peculiar to Deity, divine perfections and works, and a perfect equality and likeness to the Father are ascribed to him. He is called the Creator, and appointed to be the Judge. Divine glory, in the redemption of sinners, made it reasonable this astonishing event should take place.

To sinful mortals, who are filled with the pride of rank, it may appear degrading, for an infinite God thus to unite himself with a creature. But it doth not appear thus to perfect wisdom and goodness. The jealousy of rank cannot belong to him. His majesty is the majesty of love; and he is fearful in the praises that will forever be offered to his condescending mercy.

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### The work of the Holy Spirit.

Among modern errors, it is one of the greatest to deny the efficacious work of the Spirit in convincing, renewing and sanctifying men. The temptation to this, arises from men's desire to think well of themselves. The doctrines of human depravity and of a just exposure to eternal death, and of the need of divine influence to convince and convert sinners, are so connected, that to admit one, implies the truth of the other. Therefore, that they may think themselves not very guilty and exposed, they are tempted to deny the need of a Spirit, and his whole convincing and applying work to the hearts of sinners. There are reasons enough why unprincipled men are opposers or secret contemners in a day of reli-

gion. If that which they see, be the truth and work of God, it condemns them; shows their certain danger; and calls them to leave the things they love. But can we account for the reformation that often happens, in particular places and persons, without recurring to the doctrine of a special influence from God? Why do we at times, see multitudes inquiring, concerned and pained with a sense of their sin; self-condemned, and then rejoicing in the truth? Why do we find them, with the sentence of self-condemnation in their mouths, still hoping in the free grace of God; bearing a new testimony for the truth; and confessing the law of God to be right, at the expense of acknowledging themselves to be the chief of sinners? Why do we find them leaving their old pleasures, and professing that they have found new delights; confessing their old sins and amusements, and departing from them; and daily attending to the duties, in which they once had no satisfaction? Why have we seen infidels and men, who had fallen into every kind of loose and dissipating principles, with opened eyes become sensible they were going down to the chambers of death: and at once turn round to acknowledge the power of Christ's religion and become the friends of his friends? These things have been seen to take place, without any external cause of excitement. They have not been the effects of a fright, by any sudden & awful providences of God; not the consequence of combination in families and neighborhoods, for while one or a few have been taken, others have been left to part from their dearest friends, rather than devote themselves to the service and praises of God; not the effects of enthusiasm, for the serious have been calm and the greatest friends of order and decency, and very humble in the midst of their greatest joys. When all external causes appear to be insufficient to produce these effects; when men's thoughts are thus called from time to eternity, must we not suppose the cause to be from God's own immediate action?

Further, this appears from the nature of the effects which are wrought, as well as from there being no other cause which could produce them, besides the direct influence of heaven. The moral natures or dispositions of men, are not changed by small causes. There is a taste or relish in the mind, which we commonly call natural, that doth not appear suddenly or by small causes to be

altered. But in the present case, the effects wrought in short seasons of time, have been great. Persons turning the habitual current of their thoughts from time to eternity; from the pleasures of the world to a delight in God, and in the expected happiness of serving and praising him forever; from earthly amusements to the pleasures of christian communion, and delight in prayer and the worship of God; from vain companions to serious ones, whose company but little before was painful; from exalting themselves, to deep humility; from themselves and the world, to a Saviour, his laws, and his service. These are great effects, which run through the whole economy and manners of life, and through all the feelings of the heart. The subjects of this change, do also make an acknowledgment by which it is confirmed. They say, "once we were blind, now we see. Once we were miserable in the pursuit of worldly happiness; now we are happy by relinquishing the world and ourselves." Such effects as these, if witnessed by a good conversation, must be allowed to come from the operation of a divine and all-powerful cause.—*N. Strong.*

### Sin and Holiness.

What is the false theory relative to the nature of sin, compared with the true one? It is the fond opinion of many, that sin originally consists of extravagant or inordinate self-love. Ordinate self-love they approve; but inordinate self-love they disapprove. But how injurious and visionary the opinion! For, who can rationally believe that a little self-love is good, and that much of it is bad? Now what is the chaff to the wheat? For with equal correctness they may hold the reverse; that a great degree of it is good, and a small degree bad; because the theory of truth assures us that the criminality of affections does not depend on their degree, but on their nature. It is the nature of the corrosive mineral which constitutes its poisonous influence; and not its quantity. It is the nature of the viper, and not his size, which constitutes him a noxious reptile. Thus it is the selfish, the monopolizing nature of self-love which constitutes its sinfulness. For the subject of self-love disregards the honour of God or

the best interest of the universe, and supremely seeks his own personal enjoyment. To a mind in the habit of correctly examining and comparing things, it is easily ascertained that all sin radically consists of self-love, or, as the scripture expresses it, in man's being the lover of his own self, the lover of pleasure, rather than the lover of God. Self-gratification in some channel or other is the substance of all iniquity. As no stream can continue to run without a fountain to supply it, so no sin without selfish object and desire. Of those who are not satisfied with this description of sin, and contend, that sin consists of exercises which precede selfish acts or volitions, we ask for the moral, generical difference between selfish volitions and those previous exercises by which selfish volitions are originated. For we confess ourselves wholly incapable of discovering the criminality of any moral exercise which is not of a selfish nature. *Self-gratification is decidedly the seed of transgression.*

In this connexion we also ask, What is the chaff to the wheat? What is the false theory relative to holiness, compared with the correct theory? For those who plead that the inordinate exercises of self-love only are sinful, must also plead that all the ordinate exercises of selfishness are holy. But this sentiment is too erroneous to require serious confutation. For what correct mind will believe that self-love constitutes holiness and sin both, and that holiness and sin are radically and generically the same?—Alas! alas! does inspiration teach us that holiness and sin are originally the same? that holiness is constituted by less self-love, and sin by more? Who can conscientiously believe, that holiness would become sin, and sin holiness, by the mere decrease and increase of selfishness? For, as the nature of every affection is ascertained by the nature of its object, so we at once ascertain the generical difference between holiness and sin. Light and darkness are not more diverse than the objects of holy and sinful affections. Holiness has for its object or interest the honor of God, or the highest happiness of the universe: sin has for its object the self-gratification of the sinner. O how lamentable that the legates or ambassadors of the Prince of Peace should ever confound the opposite principles of holiness and sin, by inculcating, that both are primarily and radically self-love! For nothing is more

evident in scripture, than that religion is impartial, or disinterested. He who loves God with all the heart, and his neighbour with the love of equality, and a thousand neighbors in correspondent proportion, agreeably to the spirit of the command, is a disinterested character. His estimation of objects, not excepting himself, is according to their real value and importance. Hence the apostle, while teaching others to be unselfish, and to prefer the salvation of many before any personal interest; while pressing them to realize the mind of Christ, who came not to seek his own; while delivering the most disinterested precepts, he solemnly declares his readiness to exhibit the most shining example of impartial affection. For the personal sacrifice he conditionally contemplated was inestimably great, because the salvation of millions was inestimably precious. His object harmonized with his impartial love. Alas! what is the loose, starving theory of Paul's patriotism or national attachment, inculcated by false and vain teachers, compared with his heavenly soul, which was as big as the universe! I honour and revere the heavenly man. For when he prepares the mind to contemplate the vast sacrifice he was willing to make, by saying, "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost," his object was literally commensurate with his godly wish: he spake like a man of wisdom, he imitated the glorious Saviour. But if we misconstrue him; if his heart did not correspond with the literal import of his original language, let him, yea, let his Master, correct us at that day when the divine theory will be crowned with influence. Now the noble sentiment of the apostle is disputed by the advocates of self-love. Then every objector will be silent; for the truth will deeply impress all minds.—*S. Spring.*

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### Dying Scenes.

For about six weeks past I have had occasion to spend several hours of almost every day with the sick and the dying. These scenes are to a minister like walking the hospitals to a young surgeon. The various cases which occur exemplify, illustrate, and explain, with a commanding energy, many truths, which



may be learned indeed at home, but cannot be so well understood, or their force so sensibly felt, without the advantage of experience and observation. As physicians, besides that competent general knowledge of their profession which should be common to them all, have usually their several favourite branches of study, some applying themselves more to botany, others to chymistry, others to anatomy; so ministers, as their inclinations and gifts differ, are led more closely to consider some particular branch of the system of divine truth. Some are directed to state and defend the doctrines of the gospel; some have a talent for elucidating difficult texts of scripture; some have a turn for explaining the prophetic parts, and so of the rest. For myself, if it be lawful to speak of myself, and so far as I can judge, anatomy is my favourite branch; I mean the study of the human heart, with its workings and counter-workings, as it is differently affected in a state of nature or of grace, in the different seasons of prosperity, adversity, conviction, temptation, sickness, and the approach of death. The Lord, by sending me hither, provided me a good school for these purposes. I know not where I could have had a better, or affording a greater variety of characters, in proportion to the number of people; and as they are mostly a poor people, and strangers to that address which is the result of education and converse with the world, there is a simplicity in what they say or do, which gives me a peculiar advantage in judging of their cases.

But I was about to speak of death. Though the grand evidence of those truths upon which our hopes are built arises from the authority of God speaking them in his word, and revealing them by his Spirit, to the awakened heart, (for till the heart is awakened it is incapable of receiving this evidence;) yet some of these truths are so mysterious, so utterly repugnant to the judgment of depraved nature, that, through the remaining influence of unbelief and vain reasoning, the temptations of Satan, and the subtle arguments with which some men reputed wise attack the foundations of our faith, the minds even of believers are sometimes capable of being shaken. I know no better corroborating evidence for the relief of the mind under such assaults than the testimony of dying persons, especially of such as have lived out of the noise of controversy, and who perhaps never heard a syllable of what has

been started in these evil days, against the Deity of Christ, his atonement, and other important articles. Permit me, my Lord, to relate, upon this occasion, some things which exceedingly struck me in the conversation I had with a young woman whom I visited in her last illness about two years ago. She was a sober, prudent person, of plain sense, could read her Bible, but had read little beside: her knowledge of the world was nearly confined to the parish; for I suppose she was seldom if ever twelve miles from home in her life. She had known the gospel about seven years before the Lord visited her with a lingering consumption, which at length removed her to a better world. A few days before her death, I had been praying by her bed-side, and in my prayer I thanked the Lord, that he gave her now to see that she had not followed cunningly-devised fables. When I had finished, she repeated that word, "No, she said, not cunningly devised fables; these are realities indeed; I feel their truth, I feel their comfort. O tell my friends, tell my acquaintance, tell inquiring souls, tell poor sinners, tell all the daughters of Jerusalem, (alluding to Solomon's Song, v. 16. from which she had just before desired me to preach at her funeral,) what Jesus has done for my soul. Tell them, that now in the time of need I find him my beloved and my friend, and as such I commend him to them." She then fixed her eyes stedfastly upon me, and proceeded as well as I can recollect, as follows: "Sir, you are highly favored in being called to preach the gospel. I have often heard you with pleasure; but give me leave to tell you, that I now see all you have said, or can say, is comparatively but little. Nor till you come into my situation, and have death and eternity full in your view, will it be possible for you to conceive the vast weight and importance of the truths you declare. Oh! Sir, it is a serious thing to die; no words can express what is needful to support the soul in the solemnity of a dying hour."

I believe it was the next day when I visited her again. After some discourse as usual, she said, with a remarkable vehemence of speech, Are you sure I cannot be mistaken? I answered without hesitation, Yes, I am sure; I am not afraid to say, my soul for your's that you are right. She paused a little, and then replied, "You say true, I know I know I am right. I feel that my

hope is fixed upon the Rock of ages ; I know in whom I have believed. Yet if you could see with my eyes you would not wonder at my question. But the approach of death presents a prospect, which till then hidden from us, and which cannot be described." She said much more to the same purpose, and in all she spoke there was a dignity, weight, and evidence, which I suppose few professors of divinity, when lecturing from the chair, have at any time equalled. We may well say with Elihu, Who teacheth like him ? Many instances of the like kind I have met with here. I have a poor girl near me who looks like an idiot, and her natural capacity is indeed very small ; but the Lord has been pleased to make her acquainted alternately with great temptations, and proportionally great discoveries of his love and truth. Sometimes, when her heart is enlarged, I listen to her with astonishment. I think no books or ministers I ever met with have given me such an impression and understanding of what the apostle styles " the depths of God," as I have upon some occasions received from her conversation.

But I am rambling again. My attendance upon the sick is not always equally comfortable, but could I learn aright, it might be equally instructive. Some confirm the preciousness of a Saviour to me, by the cheerfulness with which, through faith in his name, they meet the king of terrors. Others no less confirm it, by the terror and reluctance they discover when they find they must die ; for though there are too many who sadly slight the blessed gospel while they are in health, yet in this place most are too enlightened to be quite thoughtless about their souls, if they retain their senses in their last illness. Then, like the foolish virgins, they say, Give us of your oil : Then they are willing that ministers and professors should pray with them and speak to them. Through the Lord's goodness, several whom I have visited in these circumstances have afforded me good hope ; they have been savingly changed by his blessing upon what has passed at the eleventh hour. I have seen a marvellous and blessed change take place in their language, views, and tempers. I now visit a young person, who is cut short in her nineteenth year by a consumption. and I think cannot live many days. I found her very ignorant and insensible, and she remained so a good while ; but of late I

hope her heart is touched. She feels her lost state, she seems to have some right desires, she begins to pray, and in such a manner as I cannot but hope the Lord is teaching her, and will reveal himself to her before she departs. But it is sometimes otherwise. I saw a young woman die last week; I had been often with her; but the night she was removed she could only say, O I cannot live, I cannot live! She repeated this mournful complaint as long as she could speak; for as the vital powers were more oppressed, her voice was changed into groans; her groans grew fainter and fainter, and in about a quarter of an hour after she had done speaking she expired. Poor thing, I thought as I stood by her bedside, if you were a Dutchess, in this situation, what could the world do for you now! I thought likewise how many things are there that now give us pleasure or pain, and assume a mighty importance in our view, which, in a dying hour, will be no more to us than the clouds which fly unnoticed over our heads. Then the truth of our Lord's aphorism will be seen, felt and acknowledged, "One thing is needful." *J. Newton.*

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## ANECDOTES.

### PROTESTANTS REPROVED.

"I remember," says Mr. Matthew Henry, "when I was a young man, coming up to London in the stage coach, in King James's time, there happened to be a gentleman in the company that then was not afraid to own himself a Jesuit: many rencounters he and I had upon the road, and this was one: he was praising the custom, in popish countries, of keeping the church doors always open, for people to go in at any time to say their prayers. I told him that it looked too much like the practice of the Pharisees, that prayed in the synagogues, and did not agree with Christ's command, 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter not into the church with the doors open, but into thy closet, and shut thy doors.' When he was pressed with that argument, he replied, with some vehemence, 'I believe you Protestants say your prayers no where; for (said he) I have often laid in inns in the same room with them, and have carefully watched them, and could never perceive that any of them said their prayers, night or morning, but one, and he was a Presbyterian.'" Superstitious and self righteous as the Papists are, they are very attentive to the form at least, while it is too true that many Protestants, so called, never pray at all,—*Fas est doceri ab hoste.*

## POETRY.

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He led them by the right way

When Israel was from Egypt freed,  
The Lord, who brought them out,  
Help'd them in every time of need,  
But led them round about.  
To enter Canaan soon they hop'd ;  
But quickly chang'd their mind,  
When the Red Sea their passage stopp'd,  
And Pharaoh march'd behind.  
The desert fill'd them with alarms,  
For water and for food ;  
And Amalek, by force of arms,  
To check their progress stood.  
They often murmur'd by the way,  
Because they judg'd by sight ;  
But were at length constrain'd to say,  
The Lord had led them right.  
In the Red Sea that stopp'd them first,  
Their enemies were drown'd ;  
The rocks gave water for their thirst,  
And manna spread the ground.  
By fire and cloud their way was shown  
Across the pathless sands ;  
And Amalek was overthrown  
By Moses' lifted hands.  
The way was right their hearts to prove,  
To make God's glory known ;  
And shew his wisdom, power, and love  
Engag'd to save his own.  
Just so the true believer's path  
Through many dangers lies ;  
Tho' dark to sense, 'tis right to faith,  
And leads us to the skies.

*J. Newton.*

## Samson's Lion.

The lion that on Samson roar'd,  
And thirsted for his blood,  
With honey afterwards was stor'd,  
And furnish'd him with food.

Believers, as they pass along,  
With many lions meet,  
But gather sweetness from the strong,  
And from the eater, meat.

The lions rage and roar in vain,  
For Jesus is their shield;  
Their losses prove a certain gain,  
Their troubles comfort yield.

The world and Satan join their strength,  
To fill their souls with fears;  
But crops of joy they reap at length,  
From what they sow in tears.

Afflictions make them love the word,  
Stir up their hearts to prayer;  
And many precious proofs afford  
Of their Redeemer's care.

The lions roar, but cannot kill,  
Then fear them not, my friends,  
They bring us, tho' against their will,  
The honey Jesus sends.

*J. Newton.*

MAY

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